

RECENT LITERATURE.

Nehrling's Birds.¹—The favorable opinion expressed (Auk, VII, Jan. 1890, p. 70) of this work upon the appearance of its first two Parts is fully justified in the event of the completion of Volume I, which reaches us in a very handsome exterior. We believed then that Mr. Nehrling had a message to deliver, and were not mistaken. From his earliest boyhood he has studied birds in their native haunts, and has taken time to tell us what they taught him. His life-histories are based chiefly upon his own observations, made during many years from Wisconsin to Florida and Texas; where original research has failed to reach, he has known how to draw upon various sources which need not be here specified. "For the purpose of studying the life of our birds I spent several years in Texas, five years in the Ozark region of southwestern Missouri, and a number of years in different parts of Illinois. I also visited the southern Alleghanies and different localities in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, etc. Yet this work would be incomplete should I have neglected to quote freely from the writings of our great American ornithologists of the present time." Those to whom such characterization may apply will no doubt be glad to find that anything they have written has served so excellent a purpose as Mr. Nehrling's. It would not be difficult to characterize his work in words of our own, but we will hear what the author has to say of his intent. Authors' opinions of their own performances are often as reliable as any reviewer's can be, and never more so than when a modest and entirely honest author speaks of what he set about to accomplish. "In the present work," says its author in his preface, "which is intended to fill the gap between the very expensive and the merely technical ornithological books, I aim 'to combine accuracy and reliability of biography with a minimum of technical description,' and to have the work 'illustrated in such a way that all figures are recognizable.' Although this work is written for all lovers of natural history, I specially endeavor to inspire our young people with a tender regard for the feathered minstrels of our woodlands, fields and meadows, groves and gardens."

We can congratulate Mr. Nehrling upon the entirely successful accomplishment of his designs. We should say much more in the present instance, had it not fallen to our reviewing lot to have spoken quite to

¹ Our Native Birds | —of— | Song and Beauty, | being | A Complete History of all the Songbirds, Flycatchers, Hummingbirds, Swifts, | Goatsuckers, Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, Trogons, Cuckoos | and Parrots, of North America. | — | By Henry Nehrling, | [etc.]—With thirty-six colored plates after water-color paintings | by Prof. Robert Ridgway, [etc.], | Prof. A. Goering, Leipzig, and Gustav Muetzel, Berlin. | — | Volume I. | — | Milwaukee: | George Brumder. | 1893. Large 4to or sm. fol., pp. i-l, 1-371, pll. col'd. i-xviii, some figg. in text; ed. le luxe, full Russia, gilt-edged, rubricated margins and title.

the point before, and we must not be guilty of plagiarizing — no, not even of auto-plagiarism. The faithful readers of 'The Auk' have been given the reference, and can easily turn to what would otherwise be said at the present juncture. We have not a word of that notice to retract or modify. Mr. Nehrling's book has taken, and will doubtless long maintain, the position he himself assigns as fitting, and no author could desire more than this. He has written to good purpose; his work should have a long, prosperous, and useful life. Nehrling will probably awake some day to find his writings ranked with those it becomes customary to call 'classic,' when their respective authors have forgotten alike the pangs and pleasures of delivery, and grown insensible to silence or applause.

As the present Volume I contains 18 plates, and 36 are promised per title, we understand it is to be followed by one more of like proportions. The present volume seems to be entirely Oscinine, and Mr. Nehrling may have to put on his thinking-cap if he is to bring the rest of the Passerines and all the Picarians into the category of "birds of song and beauty." We are not informed regarding any business aspect of the work, and its consequently necessary limitations, but Mr. Nehrling's plan seems to us capable of expansion beyond the advertised limits. All birds do not sing, but all are beautiful to one who understands them and keeps in touch with them as well as Mr. Nehrling does. We imagine that the publication should be immensely popular and that the publisher would be justified in amplifying its scope, until all our birds are brought under the one elastic category, for the like treatment at a Nehrling's hand. To cite an instance, there are the game-birds, in which a very large number of non-ornithological ornithologists are always interested. "Bobwhite" sounds well, one of the Ducks sings well enough to have been named *Anas cantans*, and *Aix sponsa* is certainly a bird of beauty. But we desist, for we are in danger of falling into that easiest and worst of reviewing sins — telling an author what he ought to do, instead of informing the public how well or ill he has done that which he designed to do.

The plates of this work are of an uneven order of merit. If we may be permitted to express an individual preference, without entering into invidious comparisons, we may say that those of the Goldcrest and Gnat-catcher please us most, and it should not be difficult to maintain that degree of excellence.

With hearty welcome, congratulations, and hopes for the speedy completion of a work which departs so widely from the average of its kind in making so near an approach to such as Audubon typifies,—E. C.

Anthony on the Birds of San Pedro Martir, Lower California.¹—This is a liberally annotated list of 121 species, based on the author's personal observations, made chiefly during the month of May, 1893. "The region embraced in the name of San Pedro Martir consists of a high plateau of

¹ Birds of San Pedro Martir, Lower California. By A. W. Anthony. Zoc, Vol. IV, 1893, pp. 228-247.